CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 24 February 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 843rd plenary meeting of the Conference. Before I go into the substantive programme of the day could I, with your approval, make some initial remarks.

Distinguished delegates, the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament can be likened to the travels of Sisyphus. Condemned forever to push a stone up a hill only to see it roll back down just before he reached the top and then to have to start all over again. Some have simply been crushed beneath its weight, others have barely survived. Under the present circumstances to aspire to be one of the latter kind is to be ambitious. In this forum modesty is becoming of a wise Chair.

With such an end in view I shall seek your cooperation. I regret very much other compelling duties kept me from being in Geneva last week and from my present onerous responsibilities. Granted that dabbling in trade is not as grand as debating on disarmament, but the head of a small mission sometimes needs to do both. Given that the duty of the CD presidency is not one towards which my peers would direct curvaceous glances, I hardly ran the risk of loss of office. I am in debt to my colleague, Ms. Ismat Jahan, who held the fort in my absence. In the discharge of my onerous responsibilities I will look to all of you for support. It gives me a sense of satisfaction to know that I can count on the cooperation of our distinguished Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and our very able Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and their colleagues.

To fill Ambassador Kreid's shoes, or his chair, is not easy. I should be deeply remiss were I not to begin by paying my predecessor a well-deserved tribute. He has worked tirelessly, diligently, patiently and passionately, and through his dexterous stewardship and wise guidance he has sought to bring us closer to our goal. I was touched by the warm sentiments he expressed towards me in his concluding presidential remarks, particularly the reference to my personal charm albeit in an exaggerated fashion.

The Conference on Disarmament is, as has often been said, the sole multilateral forum devoted to that purpose. True, progress in our work, at least for now, appears stalled. Yet in the recent past the CD has notched up some no mean creditable achievements: the Chemical Weapons Convention and the CTBT, to name but two. I, for one, do not believe that it needs to produce a treaty annually in order to be judged successful. I believe its success lies in its ability to exchange views, to provide a forum to hear and to be heard, to reflect and to reason and then, when it is able, to reach and to frame agreements. This is not a forum to do business in haste, for it deals with the most primordial instincts of humankind, safety and security, towards which civilizations have devoted preponderant portions of their energies. I shall, therefore, not be a President in a hurry.

This is not to say I shall not be striving towards progress, be it in nuclear disarmament or in the prevention of an arms race in outer space or in fissile material or in negative security assurances. Each of these areas deserves our attention. On some there has been welcome groundwork laid. I intend to build on it brick by brick, trying to ensure that with each the edifice becomes firmer.

(The President)

Time was when we looked to this forum to attain the objectives of United Nations General Assembly resolution 1378 (XIV) of 20 November 1959, which called for general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Our inability to make headway towards that noble aim, or even, as has been the case over the last three years, to agree on a programme of work has led many of us to see the glass as half empty. Let us see it the other way, as half full, and let us see how we can increase its content drop by drop. But whatever steps we take, whatever advance we make, whatever forward movement we achieve will need to be done in agreement, in consensus and in harmony. Balance and symmetry will be critical in making such progress sustainable.

I am pleased to be able to say that in my own country, Bangladesh, the goal of general and complete disarmament has been incorporated into our Constitution. Our main purpose in joining the CD was to contribute towards the building of a peaceful and stable world so that our finite resources could be devoted to improving our quality of life. I am glad this presidency affords my country an opportunity to make a modest contribution to this end. I know that many members in comparable milieux with comparable policies and similar visions.

Those who are militarily more powerful, particularly the nuclear Powers, undeniably have a greater responsibility. I am not urging them to make undue sacrifices. I am simply inviting them to engage themselves with all others in a serious dialogue, in a spirit of understanding and flexibility, for a common cause. The group system was designed to advance, not to restrict, the search for common ground. Let us seek and find it.

I have consulted with some, I shall with more. I intend to make this presidency a collective endeavour, if there is a mechanism to try, I shall try it. If there is an effort to make, I shall make it. If there is a discussion to hold, I shall hold it. If there is an initiative to take, I shall take it. I shall relent. Enoch Powell, a controversial yet brilliant scholar and politician, once said "All political careers end in failures". This might also be true of most CD presidencies, but this I assure you: it shall not be this time round for want of trying.

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, first of all let me thank you for giving me the floor and congratulate you on your assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament at this important stage of its activity. I would like to wish you success and assure you of my delegation's readiness for constructive cooperation. Given that this is my first statement during the Conference session of this year, I would also like to welcome our new colleagues who have joined us in our work.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century international relations are undergoing a deep transformation. On the one hand, a qualitative positive shift in global affairs is obvious. The threat of a large-scale nuclear conflict has been removed. The cold war is over. Globalization, which opens the broadest opportunities for multifaceted interaction, is gaining momentum. On the other hand, the burden of the whole range of unresolved problems remains and is even growing heavier. Some of these problems are a legacy of the past, the epoch of confrontation. But the risks and challenges of a new generation that have recently come to light are growing steadily more acute. All this also applies to the sphere of disarmament, one that affects the

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interests of the entire world community. Unfortunately the positive trends in disarmament which have been gaining strength for decades have started noticeably to mark time. Today a real threat is emerging to the existence of the system of arrangements and agreements constituting the basis for limitation and reduction of nuclear arms.

The Conference on Disarmament is a kind of barometer in the field of international security. As practice shows, all discussions about priorities in the work of this unique multilateral negotiating forum are closely bound up with a concrete political situation in the world. It is not surprising therefore that the topic of the prevention of an arms race in outer space has been so often and so persistently referred to during our plenary sessions. The growing attention to the problem is explained by a whole number of factors.

More than 30 States are already involved in outer space activities and many other countries are seeking to join this "club". The prospects for using near-Earth space for resolving humanity's economic and social problems are continually expanding. But it has to be admitted that outer space is increasingly being drawn into the sphere of military activity.

The problems of preventing an arms race in outer space have been for many years, and remain, among the priorities of Russian diplomacy. You will recall that our country has repeatedly initiated proposals in this field. The best known of them are the proposals from the early 1980s for the conclusion of treaties prohibiting the deployment in outer space of weapons of any kind and banning the use of force in outer space and from outer space against the Earth. Despite quite wide support those initiatives have, for a whole series of reasons, never been implemented in practice.

The Russian side has recently put forward new ideas that are directly linked to the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In this connection, we would like to draw your attention to the proposal made by the Russian President during the G8 meeting in Cologne in June 1999 to create a global missile and missile technology non-proliferation control system. Its implementation could, in our view, be an important step conducive to enhancing the predictability of the international environment, strengthening stability and attaining the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space.

That proposal is based on ideas expressed earlier, at various times and in various forums, by other countries such as France, Great Britain and Australia, for instance. We believe that resolving an issue of such magnitude requires achieving the broadest possible international interaction. The important thing at this stage is to determine the possible points of convergence that would allow all interested parties to engage in future in a more specific discussion in a context of opposition to missile proliferation.

The topicality of the outer-space issue today derives from the fact that no legal rules have yet been elaborated prohibiting the deployment, use or testing in space of types of weapons other than weapons of mass destruction. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty does not establish a general prohibition of the use of outer space for military purposes. The gradual development of space

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technology and the latest high-technology weapons systems could serve as an incentive to some States to use this legal loophole for purposes inconsistent with peaceful activity in near-Earth space. It is not by chance that the final document of the third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE-III), the Vienna Declaration, contains a provision on the necessity of preventing an arms race in outer space and on the conduct there of peaceful activities in order to maintain international peace and security.

Advances in space technology are being actively employed for such "ancillary" military purposes as telecommunications, navigation, global positioning systems, etc. They are also being employed to maintain strategic stability in the world, namely to sound the Earth in order to ensure compliance with disarmament agreements. Similar rules have been embodied in some bilateral Russian-United States agreements and have received support from the world community. By using space-based systems it will obviously be possible in the future to resolve a more complex range of issues connected with ensuring international security such as, for instance, monitoring proliferation of nuclear and missile technologies or the build-up of conventional and strategic armaments in potential conflict zones.

It is well known that the world public is especially worried about the danger of turning near-Earth space into a new arena of power confrontation. The real risk of a new spiral in the arms race in outer space is connected above all with ideas of deploying their weapon systems directly intended for destruction of space, aerial and ground targets. The prevention of an arms race both in outer space and on Earth fully and completely depends on the viability of the 1972 ABM Treaty. It is well known that this document prohibits the development, testing and deployment in outer space of anti-ballistic missile components. Thus, its regime permits the prevention of the emergence of a whole class of space weapons, namely anti-ballistic missile weapons.

We want unambiguously to state that the Russian side is not conducting negotiations with the United States on the adaptation of the ABM Treaty. Our position, based on the supreme interests of strengthening peace and international stability, will not change. We openly and frankly state that we will not take part in the destruction of this fundamental document - which is, in practice, what is at issue.

The 1972 ABM Treaty indeed provides for the possibility of making changes to its provisions and the parties to the Treaty have made use of that in the past. However, the essence of those changes lay in reinforcing the Treaty regime, strengthening its "deterrent" fundamentals. Today our American partners are proposing that this document be adapted in such a way as to permit deployment of a "limited" national missile defence (NMD). That is contrary to the key provision of article 1 of the Treaty, which constitutes its substance. In other words, it is proposed to transform the ABM Treaty from an instrument prohibiting the creation of NMDs into a treaty concerning the creation of such systems, i.e. into its opposite. The result of such a transformation of the Treaty might be the setting in disarmament practice of a precedent whereby

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an addition or amendment to an agreement that limits and curbs the development of the most advanced type of armaments would convert it into an agreement permitting the building-up of military potential. We do not agree with such logic. This approach of ours was confirmed once again during the recent visit to Moscow of the United States Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright.

If the United States implemented its unilateral plans on NMD, the ABM Treaty would be destroyed. The structure of treaties and agreements in the field of nuclear disarmament would crumble along with it. Serious damage would be done to the entire disarmament process, as well as to the regimes for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and missile technology. Extremely dangerous incentives to unleash an arms race in outer space would be created.

We consider the ABM Treaty to be a factor of global significance, the basis for strategic stability. In this sense its role goes far beyond the bounds of the arrangement between the small group of States to which it is formally limited. The results of the voting during the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly on the "Preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty" resolution proposed by Russia jointly with Belarus and China were convincing proof of that and we see them as support for the efforts to enhance the Treaty's effectiveness and prestige.

We, like the majority of the world's other States, are increasingly concerned by the ongoing testing in the United States within the framework of the programme to create a national missile defence system. We constantly make our concerns known to our US partners during bilateral consultations, including the ones here in Geneva pursuant to the June 1999 Cologne agreement between the Presidents of Russia and the United States.

We are sure that the preservation of the Treaty corresponds to United States interests as well, especially in the context of the recent non-ratification by the United States Senate of the CTBT. The scrapping of the ABM Treaty would call into question everything that we have managed to achieve over the space of nearly 30 years in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and disarmament control. It would inevitably deal a blow to the security interests not only of other countries, but of the United States itself.

We are convinced the Conference on Disarmament has, as stated in General Assembly resolution 54/53, the primary role in the further work on military space matters. For a number of years, serious and systematic work was done on this item in the Conference's relevant ad hoc committee: a whole series of constructive initiatives were put forward and interesting proposals were made that in our view need to be taken into account in the future work. Though this ad hoc committee had only a research mandate, the exchange of opinions that took place in it contributed towards better understanding by the countries participating in the work of the CD of the essence of this problem, as well as of the ways and means of preventing deployment of weapons in outer space.

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We share the view that the elaboration right now of specific measures to prevent an arms race in outer space would help to avoid enormous expenditure on disarming space in the future. We believe that the speedy development of an international legal regime prohibiting the deployment in outer space of weapons other than weapons of mass destruction, and first and foremost strike weapons, should be one of the international community's principal tasks. We are convinced, however, that the work of the CD on outer-space matters should not result in the creation of obstacles to peaceful exploration of outer space.

The Russian side supports the re-establishment at the CD of the ad hoc committee on the subject in order to draw up specific, practical arrangements that would block the path to the transformation of near-Earth space into a new arena for power confrontation. In this respect we express solidarity with our Chinese colleagues, who also advocate the immediate re-establishment in the CD of an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space with a mandate to elaborate and conclude arrangements for "banning, testing, deployment and use of weapons, weapon systems or components thereof in outer space, with a view to preventing the weaponization of outer space".

The Russian delegation favours constructive cooperation and a search for mutually acceptable solutions on the subject of outer space. We hope that other delegations will also show political flexibility and that the sentiment that prevails will be one of support for an immediate start to work on this matter.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Sidorov for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation wishes to extend to you its sincere congratulations on your assumption of the important post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. It is my firm belief that your rich experience and outstanding capabilities will be conducive to facilitating positive results in the work of the Conference. The Chinese delegation assures you of its fullest cooperation.

At the last plenary session, the distinguished representative of the United States made some remarks in a polemic tone of cold war nature which are detrimental to the atmosphere of the Conference on Disarmament. This is most regrettable. He made some groundless allegations and accusations against China, which I totally reject. Having no intention to engage in a prolonged argument with the distinguished United States representative, I would confine myself to a few brief comments for the record with a view to rectifying the matter.

The distinguished United States representative said: "It was implied that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was little more than a tool of the United States", "... the assertion that our NATO Allies are manipulated with impunity by the United States simply isn't true", and he talked a lot on this point. But, as evidenced by the verbatim records of the Conference, I have neither implied this nor used words to that effect in my statements here at the Conference on Disarmament. If I understand correctly, the distinguished United States representative was just

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trying to seek the opportunity to explain himself, so as to console the NATO allies. However, what the United States Ambassador said indeed presents a widespread opinion in international forums. Undoubtedly, certain countries feel ill at ease about these kinds of remarks. Be that as it may, it has never been my intention to make comments on the internal relations among members of a group of countries. At the same time, I will certainly reject such groundless accusations as were made by the distinguished United States representative, which may affect the relations between the Chinese delegation and other delegations.

I am very glad to hear the distinguished United States representative say: "We do not seek domination, we seek balance." I hope that the United States can prove these words by allowing the Conference on Disarmament to produce a balanced programme of work, rather than negotiating only the top-priority item of the United States while refusing negotiations on the other top-priority items of other countries.

The distinguished United States representative also mentioned that "there is a broad understanding" in the Conference that the two topics of nuclear disarmament and PAROS "are not ripe for treaty negotiations in the CD". I am afraid the majority of the member States of the Conference, including China, will not agree to this assertion. People cannot but ask why negotiations on nuclear disarmament and prevention of an arms race in outer space in the Conference "are not ripe"? What are the root causes for that? As we all recall, the resolution on prevention of an arms race in outer space adopted again by the United Nations General Assembly last year reiterates explicitly that the Conference has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects and invites the Conference to re-establish an ad hoc committee as early as possible during the 2000 session of the Conference. Eighty-seven per cent of the United Nations Member States (162 States) voted for this resolution, only 2 States abstained, and no State voted against it. The current reality in this Conference is that only a few countries, even only one country, due to its own outer-space weapon development programmes, insists that it is "not ripe" to negotiate on prevention of an arms race in outer space in the Conference on Disarmament. It is the delegation of this one country that vetoes, year after year and one after another, all the reasonable proposals concerning carrying out substantive work with regard to the outer space issue. In this connection, most countries have their own impartial opinions, and this should be viewed as a "broad understanding".

Moreover, some United Nations resolutions call upon the Conference to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament early in 2000 to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Certainly, other United Nations resolutions also request the Conference to start negotiations on FMCT, NSA and other issues. Is there any difference in terms of priority and importance as far as the political and legal status of the above-mentioned United Nations resolutions are concerned?

The distinguished United States representative also talked about the achievements made by the United States and the Russian Federation in the field of nuclear disarmament. Undoubtedly, these achievements are among the most welcome and most encouraging positive

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developments since the end of the cold war. However, the problem for now lies in the fact that a series of negative developments since last year have cast shadows over the United States-Russian bilateral nuclear disarmament process. What is more, the global strategic balance and stability that have been maintained for about 50 years since the end of World War II are undermined by a certain country's weapon programmes. Though the ABM Treaty could be said to be mainly a matter between two countries, based on the principle of democracy and common security, however, the global strategic balance and stability and international peace and security are matters of concern for all and for the whole international community at large. Other countries are fully entitled to have their say on matters of such a nature. Isn't the right of speech the most fundamental right of democracy?

The distinguished United States representative said that the United States neither practised a double standard on arms control agreements nor tried to weaken or abrogate the ABM Treaty. This is most welcome if the words are really honoured by deeds. I hope to see that the declarations on the civilian chemical industry are made in strict observance of the time-frame of the CWC, that the practice of setting conditions for the implementation of the CWC verification system through domestic law will be abolished and that the CTBT will be ratified at an early date. What is more important is to support the United Nations resolution on the preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty, stop seeking the amendment of that treaty, refrain from the testing and deployment of weapons inconsistent with that Treaty, and cease making the threat that the ABM Treaty must be amended otherwise a State party will withdraw from it.

The distinguished United States representative made an issue over the transparency in the nuclear field. For a country possessing the largest nuclear and conventional arsenals, being a member of the strongest military alliance and pursuing a nuclear doctrine marked by the first use of nuclear weapons, it is relatively easy to practise some transparency in the nuclear matters. The reason behind is self-evident. In this connection, I wish that the distinguished United States representative could make a positive response to the long-standing call by China for an agreement "never to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstance". If all the five nuclear-weapon States can commit themselves not to be the first to use nuclear weapons against each other, thus leading to the conclusion of a treaty banning forever the use of nuclear weapons, that would certainly be a major contribution to the forthcoming NPT review conference.

The distinguished United States representative mentioned "the nuclear force modernization". For a country always taking the lead in the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles, to take other people to task for "modernization" is hypocritical. Furthermore, I have to point out that through a series of missile defence tests, the latest one on 18 January, the United States is not only further modernizing but even "futurizing" the configuration of its offensive and defensive nuclear forces. If the missile defence programme cannot be checked, reality will prove this.

The distinguished representative of the United States spoke of the missile test in 1996. By this he alluded to the issue of Taiwan. I must solemnly point out that the Taiwan issue is

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completely an internal affair of China. No powers in the world, including the Untied States, can stop the Chinese people from realizing the re-unification of their motherland. There has always been a force in the United States trying to encourage Taiwan towards separation, and the United States has for many years continuously supplied sophisticated weaponry to the Taiwan province of China, thus encroaching upon China's sovereignty, interfering in its internal affairs and threatening its security. What the United States should do is to stop all these wrongdoings immediately.

I wish to emphasize that the Chinese delegation has all along participated in the work of the Conference in a positive, serious and responsible manner. We are not here to quarrel. Only those who are unable to justify themselves would resort to hurling abuse instead of discussion. We are prepared to discuss matters with any delegation in a calm and frank manner. We have no intention to engage in polemics. It is the hope of the Chinese delegation that this Conference could reach agreement on a comprehensive, just and balanced programme of work on the basis of equal footing and mutual respect.

The second subject of my statement today is related to the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space. As pointed out in our working paper on this issue, the prevention of an arms race in outer space is one of the most pressing and most prominent issues in the field of arms control and disarmament. This is by no means exaggeration, but a sound judgement of the real situation in the use of outer space, especially the trends and prospects of the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space.

Ever since the beginning of the use of outer space by mankind, the military use of outer space has been unceasing. The so-called "Star Wars" programme (SDI), which haunted mankind for almost 10 years during the cold war period, is still fresh in the memory of mankind. In April 1998, a certain country formulated a twenty-first-century-oriented long-term plan for space military strategies. According to this plan, military space capabilities will become a major fulcrum in implementing its national security and military strategies. Consequently, the plan identifies the seeking of space superiority as the primary task of the space force of the country in the twenty-first century. It has furthermore put forward four operational concepts to ensure its superiority in space, i.e. control of space, global engagement, full force integration and global partnership. Building up its space force, which will help maintain its space superiority in the twenty-first century, has become an important tool for it to achieve its strategic objectives.

"Control of space" is the ability to ensure uninterrupted access to space for the proponent country and its allies, freedom of operations within the space medium and the ability to deny others the use of outer space, if required. "Global engagement" is the combination of global surveillance of the Earth (ability to monitor any ground target any time) and the use of space capabilities in support of war fighting potentials on the Earth.

By 2020, the country in question will probably have deployed an NMD system with many space-based laser weapons and space-based sensors included in the system. Its surveillance and strike capabilities for land, sea and air targets will improve through the use of space systems. "Full force integration" means integrating space forces and space-derived

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information with their counterparts on land, sea and air. "Global partnership" is meant for strengthening the country's military space capabilities through making use of civilian, commercial and national space systems. With allied countries sharing costs and risks, the country will increase opportunities for itself and the flexibility of its overall military capabilities at reduced cost.

According to this plan, 20 years from now weapons based on land, in the sea and the air and using outer space as a battlefield, as well as space operation vehicles, platforms and lasers directly deployed in outer space, will become the key strategic weapon systems of that country.

In recent years, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) has been quickly revived in a certain country. Not only is the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system being developed, but the National Missile Defense (NMD) system is being vigorously pursued as well. Due to the implementation of these programmes, outer space is being transformed into a new weaponry testing ground and thus deprived of its tranquillity. In 1999 alone, the said country conducted several ballistic missile interception tests in outer space and it is planning to carry out dozens more of such tests in the coming years.

The National Missile Defense system pursued by that country is typical space weapon system. Its basic operation process is as follows: first detect the missile launch of an enemy State through early-warning satellites deployed in outer space; then detect and track targets through sensors, including those deployed in outer space; and finally intercept and destroy the target missiles in space with one or more interceptor missiles. The space system is an important, integral part of the NMD system and space will also become a battlefield for the system. The threater high-altitude missile defence systems that are currently under development, such as the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system of its army and the Navy Theater Wide (NTW) system of its navy, rely on the integral space system and carry out interception missions in space.

In a word, both the TMD and NMD systems under development are dependent on space systems for support and on advanced space weapons for intercepting missiles in space. The space-based laser that is under vigorous development is, as indicated by its name, a weapon system directly deployed in outer space. According to the current plan, that country will deploy 14 to 24 space-based lasers at an altitude of 1,300 kilometers in outer space in the future.

"Control of space" is, in essence, an attempt to establish domination of outer space by means of advanced technology, so as to serve one's own strategic objectives. This will deprive other countries of their right to benefit from outer space through peaceful means as well as of their legitimate right of self-defence. It shows that the said country is seeking unilateral military and strategic superiority by any means available. This will definitely undermine global and regional peace, security and stability and disrupt strategic equilibrium.

There are two scenarios if the plan is materialized. First, other countries may have to reconcile themselves to the reality without challenging the attempt of a certain space Power to

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seek absolute strategic superiority on the ground and in space, in addition to its currently largest and most advanced nuclear and conventional arsenals. Second, other countries may have to take responsive measures on the ground, in the air and in outer space, the result of which would be unpredictable. Whatever the outcome, the efforts in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation will turn out to be futile.

Similarly, the missile defence programme itself is also likely to cause weaponization of outer space. The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty) prohibits its States parties from developing, testing and deploying ABM systems or components that are space-based. It also prohibits the development and deployment of national missile defence systems that are capable of covering the entire territory of a country. This Treaty has been playing an indispensable role in maintaining global strategic stability, preventing an arms race in outer space and ensuring gradual progress in nuclear disarmament. With the end of the cold war, the rivalry between the two super-Powers for hegemony has disappeared and peace and development have become the aspiration of the world's people and the main theme of the times. Against this background, arms control treaties like the ABM Treaty should have played an even more important role. If a State party attempts to evade its Treaty obligations or even tear up the Treaty, it will set a bad precedent in the field of multilateral arms control and disarmament. It will not only undermine global and regional strategic balance and stability and obstruct or even reverse the nuclear disarmament process, but will also open the door to the weaponization of outer space.

The mentioned facts show that the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space are not sheer imagination. No country should cite any excuse to prevent the Conference on Disarmament from conducting substantive work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and prohibition of the weaponization of outer space, including negotiations in this regard. The international community must act without any delay to keep the worst from happening. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference should, under its agenda item of PAROS, and taking into account the latest movements concerning the development of relevant weapons systems, including the missile defence systems, take concrete measures without any delay to prevent effectively the weaponization of outer space, prohibit the test, deployment and use of any weapon systems and their components in outer space, stop any country from using outer space as a battlefield and prohibit the use of outer space to strike ground targets and seek strategic superiority on the ground.

It should be emphasized that countries with the greatest space capabilities should assume special responsibilities in preventing the weaponization of outer space, preventing an arms race in outer space and ensuring the use of outer space for peaceful purposes. Pending the conclusion of new international legal instruments on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the countries concerned should undertake not to develop space weapons and anti-missile weapons and not to test, deploy or use any weapons, weapons systems or their components in outer space.

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The Chinese delegation sincerely hopes that all sides in the Conference will, by seriously examining the current situation and responding to the universal request of the international community, actively promote the substantive work of the Conference in preventing an arms race in outer space and negotiating an international legal instrument banning the testing, deployment and use of weapons, weapon systems and their components in outer space.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Hu for his statement and for the kinds words addressed to the Chair.

That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor. That does not appear to be the case. So that also concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 2 March 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.